

Background

Farnham Town Council has already adopted the LGA model Code of Conduct, which is designed to protect the democratic role, encourage good conduct, and safeguard the public's trust and confidence in the role of councillor in local government.

While the Code of Conduct sets out the minimum standards of behaviour expected, together with the guidance, it is designed to encourage councillors to model the high standards expected and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to complaints being made of behaviour falling below the standards expected of councillors and in breach of the code. It is also to protect councillors, the public, local authority officers and the reputation of the local government.

Throughout the sector, there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment, and intimidation are having on local (parish and town) councils, councillors, clerks and council staff and the resulting effectiveness of local councils. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), One Voice Wales (OVW), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and county associations responded to this by setting up a Civility and Respect Working Group to oversee a Civility and Respect Project.

Civility and Respect Project

The Civility and Respect project is a joint venture between NALC, SLCC, and OVW and its aim is to support Councils through training, intervention and governance, to avoid reaching a critical stage where issues relation to bullying, harassment and intimidation are unresolved.

The Civility and Respect Working Group is working deliver tangible resources, actions and interventions in four main areas:

- providing councils with the tools to support good governance
- lobbying to strengthen the standards regime and encouraging more people to get involved
- training
- processes to intervene to provide support to struggling councils.

The Project is asking Town Councils to support the initiative by signing a Civility and Respect pledge.

The Pledge

The pledge is to enable councils to demonstrate that they are committed to standing up to poor behaviour across the sector and to driving through positive changes which support civil and respectful conduct.

NALC has supplied a template Civility and Respect pledge, attached at Annex 1 to this report, and Councils are being asked to pass a resolution to sign up to the pledge.

By signing the Pledge, Farnham Town Council is agreeing that it will treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles and that it:

- Has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
- Has signed up to the Code of Conduct for councillors
- Has good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts and a dignity at work policy
- Will seek professional help at the early stages should civility and respect issues arise
- Will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when it happens
- Will continue to learn from best practices in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion council through for example the Local Council Award Scheme
- Supports the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate

Support and training

One of the project's key workstreams is to deliver training packages to support councillors, clerks, and employees experiencing difficulties with bullying and harassment. The project has created packages covering local council and councillor communications and engagement. Each package comprises useful guides, custom-designed toolkits, and access to on-demand and live virtual training events. There are separate packages for clerks/officers and councillors, covering the themes of emotional intelligence and resilience, leadership in challenging situations, and how councils and councillors can avoid negative engagement on social media.

Councillors should advise the Town Clerk if they wish to attend any of the training courses, information on which is available on the [NALC website](#).

The training available will also be built into the new Councillor induction plans for 2023 and officers ongoing training plans.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Civility and Respect pledge be adopted.

FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Civility and Respect Pledge

Definition of Civility and Respect: *Civility means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Examples of ways in which you can show respect are by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people’s feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.*

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and One Voice Wales (OVW), believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

By Farnham Town council signing up to the civility and respect pledge we are demonstrating that Farnham Town Council is committed to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.

Statement	Tick to agree
Farnham Town Council agrees that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.	
Farnham Town Council has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff	
Farnham Town Council has signed up to the Code of Conduct for councillors	
Farnham Town Council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.	
Farnham Town Council commits to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.	
Farnham Town Council commits to calling out bullying and harassment when it happens.	
Farnham Town Council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme	
Farnham Town Council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.	

Agreed and pledged by Full Council on:

Signed: